



NOAA *Background*

NOAA's National Ocean Service Coastal and Ocean Stewardship

The National Ocean Service, whose roots go back to President Thomas Jefferson's creation of the Coast Survey office in 1807, has evolved into the nation's principal advocate for coastal and ocean stewardship. Today, Americans are becoming more and more interested in the oceans, and they're moving closer to them by the thousands.

In 2000, Congress enacted the Oceans Act, establishing a high-level commission to make recommendations for a coordinated and comprehensive National Ocean Policy. Federal agencies are developing long-term strategies for a new era of ocean exploration. Marine Protected Areas are being given increased attention, and a new National Center for Marine Protected Areas is being established in 2001 to strengthen the management, protection and conservation of ocean and coastal resources.

A WORD ABOUT NOAA. . .

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts research and gathers data about the global oceans, atmosphere, space, and sun, and applies this knowledge to science and service that touch the lives of all Americans.

NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas and skies, guides our use and protection of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment which sustains us all.

A Commerce Department agency, NOAA provides these services through five major organizations: the National Weather Service, the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service, and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; and numerous special program units. In addition, NOAA research and operational activities are supported by the Nation's seventh uniformed service, the NOAA Corps, a commissioned officer corps of men and women who operate NOAA ships and aircraft, and serve in scientific and administrative posts.

For further information: NOAA Office of Public Affairs, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6013, Washington, D.C. 20230. Phone: (202) 482-6090.

The National Ocean Service balances environmental protection with economic prosperity and leads the effort to ensure that our nation's coastal areas remain safe, healthy and productive.

The National Ocean Service's primary goals are:

- ☑ To promote safe navigation by providing navigation products and services to respond to changing technologies and customer needs.
- ☑ To assist coastal communities' ability to adapt to changing conditions, resulting in a balance of environmental and economic benefits.
- ☑ To enhance the preservation and restoration of the U.S. coastal and ocean environments.
- ☑ To reduce the costs and risks to people, the economy and natural resources associated with natural and human-induced hazards, including climate change.

Services

Some of the information products and services the National Ocean Service provides include aerial surveys for shoreline mapping, nautical charts, and information on water levels, currents and weather. In coastal communities, the National Ocean Service and its part-

over, please

continued from previous page

ners are revitalizing waterfronts and industrial sites, reducing damage from natural disasters, and helping to ensure that new development minimizes impacts on natural resources.

One of the National Ocean Service's biggest challenges is to increase public understanding and awareness of coastal habitats, in order to protect, enhance and restore critical areas. Coral reef destruction, harmful algal blooms, coastal "dead" zones, chemical contaminants, human population pressures, climate change and other threats to marine life dominate a lot of National Ocean Service's efforts. In addition, the National Ocean Service works to find innovative ways to provide information, tools and techniques that will reduce the vulnerability of communities to storms, tsunamis, harmful algal blooms, fish kills, marine mammal strandings and other coastal hazards. National Ocean Service establishes coastal preparedness plans, educates the public about coastal hazards and develops tools, such as Geographic Information Systems, to help communities plan for and respond to coastal hazards.

Service, Partnerships, Science and Action

Earth is the only living planet, and its life is derived in large measure from its oceans. The oceans make up 70 percent of the Earth's surface. Besides regulating weather and climate, the oceans serve as a vital source of minerals, pharmaceuticals and food. The oceans provide Americans with recreation and offer a critical

means of transportation, as well as providing an environment for diverse forms of life. As our population continues to grow, the oceans become more and more endangered. Some experts estimate that by the year 2010, more than 75 percent of the population will live within ten miles of a coastline. Today more than ever, it is critical that we understand how humans and the oceans affect each other. The National Ocean Service will continue to work to understand the role of the oceans in human health, and to study the effects human activities have on the oceans and the coasts.

The coastal ocean, which includes our coasts, our bays and estuaries, and the Great Lakes, is economically, politically and socially critical to our nation. Coastal areas are hubs of commerce, home to many major American corporations, ports and transportation networks. Coastal waters are rich in living and nonliving marine resources that sustain prosperity and economic growth nationwide. A healthy, vibrant coast means vigorous and growing economic opportunities.

The National Ocean Service, along with many partners, works to balance use of coastal and ocean resources with the need to protect, preserve and restore these priceless treasures for future generations. Knowledge of the oceans, their resources and their relationship to human activities is vital to our society's and our world's existence. Imagine a future in which our coasts and oceans enjoy robust health, provide a rich bounty of resources and are wisely managed. This vision is the inspiration for the National Ocean Service and the foundation for its goals. ☺

For more information contact National Ocean Service public affairs at (301) 713-3070, ext. 178.